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Edwards vows to keep fighting for working man

By Rebecca Cantley-Falk, STAFF WRITER
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ASHEVILLE - Former Democratic vice presidential candidate and outgoing U.S. Sen. John Edwards kicked off a state tour in Asheville Monday, thanking supporters and vowing to continue fighting for working-class Americans even after his term ends.

Edwards said he is still considering his future after an unsuccessful campaign for the White House as Sen. John Kerry's running mate.

At the Veach-Baley Federal Complex along Patton Avenue in downtown, hundreds of supporters filled the building's atrium and lined up along the railings of three higher floors overlooking the stage where he spoke. Edwards' tour to thank constituents will take him to six cities in three days.

Whether Edwards will mount a presidential bid for 2008 was a question on many minds. For now, Edwards said he is focused on supporting his wife, who has started chemotherapy treatments for breast cancer. Thoughts of a presidential bid are something he will address in the future, he said.

"My primary focus right now is getting Elizabeth well," Edwards said during a meeting Monday with the Citizen-Times editorial board. "We've got not just Cate, but our two young children that need their mother."

Elizabeth Edwards discovered a lump in her breast during the waning days of the presidential campaign and was diagnosed the day Kerry and her husband conceded. The Edwardses, married 27 years, have three children. Cate, 22, Emma Clair, 6, and Jack, 4, often were seen on the campaign trail. The couple's oldest son, Wade, died in a car accident in 1996 at age 16. Confronting 'two Americas'

During the campaign, Edwards talked about "two Americas" and the struggles of the middle class, including health-care costs and the loss of jobs to overseas markets. He said he plans to continue that emphasis and has received a variety of employment offers from universities, think tanks and public policy foundations.

"Whether it's health care, jobs or poverty, whether it's the issue of national security, I want to stay involved," Edwards said.

"There are a lot of possible ways of doing that, and I'm trying to decide what's best."

Edwards, a trial attorney who specialized in personal injury cases, said he did not plan to continue his practice.

North Carolinians elected Edwards to the Senate in 1998, his first elected office. His meteoric rise to



photo: Bill Sanders

Former Democratic vice presidential candidate and outgoing Sen. John Edwards thanks supporters Monday at the federal complex in Asheville.

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national prominence gained momentum with his run for the Democratic presidential nomination. He lost to Kerry and then became the Massachusetts Senator's running mate.

Edwards, with his trademark 1,000-watt smile, has a strong following. Many supporters want to see the 51-year-old in the White House.

"Whenever you make up your mind, all you have to do is put out the call, and we're there for you," Pat Crawford of Hendersonville told Edwards during his appearance at the federal complex.

Crawford and several others traveled throughout the South and to Maryland, Washington, D.C., and New Hampshire to support the Kerry-Edwards ticket.

"That's right," Roz Ledford, also of Hendersonville, said. "I'll go tomorrow. I'm retired so I can do whatever." Staying in the spotlight

Signs that Edwards could be considering a presidential bid would be his continued involvement in public policy issues and efforts to raise money, said Gibbs Knotts, professor of political science at Western Carolina University.

Staying in the public spotlight could be a challenge for Edwards, Knotts said. On the other hand, Edwards will have more time to campaign, and mounting a bid for president is certainly possible for him, Knotts said.

"So much of running for president has become fund-raising and name recognition," he said. "People are starting earlier and earlier. If he decides he wants to run, he can spend time raising money and continue to be out there talking about policy issues."

In this year's election, President Bush swept the South in spite of Edwards' working-class roots in Robbins, N.C., and his appeal to Southern and rural voters. Bush beat Kerry in North Carolina 56 percent to 44 percent in an election that many said came down to moral values.

In the future, Democrats must be more open about their value system, Edwards said.

"That includes being open about the fact that we embrace family and faith and hard work," Edwards said. "It means not just focusing on substantive policy issues like jobs and health care, all of which are important, but it involves both those things (policy issues and morals). It means making clear that we are a party of strength, that we believe in keeping America safe and secure."

Edwards has congratulated his successor, Republican Richard Burr, and has offered his help in the transition period, he said. Although questions remain about Edwards' future, one step his family is anticipating is a move home from Washington, D.C.

The Edwardses plan to return to North Carolina after Elizabeth completes treatment.

"The doctors are very optimistic, and so are we," John Edwards said. "But after that, it is important for me to continue to work on things that matter."

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Posted on Tue, Nov. 30, 2004The Charlotte Observer

Edwards says his fight isn't over

JIM MORRILL
Staff Writer

There was no motorcade. No Secret Service. No rock anthem introduction.

Just John Edwards strolling to the well of the chamber at Charlotte-Mecklenburg Government Center, no longer a national candidate but an outgoing U.S. senator coming to offer at least a temporary farewell.

"I want to thank you for the privilege of being able to represent you," he told about 250 supporters.

Monday was the first day of a planned statewide tour for the N.C. Democrat who leaves office in January after a single term. Earlier he spoke to a group of Observer reporters and editors and to about 300 supporters in Asheville. Today he visits Greensboro and Raleigh.

It's his first trip to North Carolina since he and his running mate, presidential nominee John Kerry, lost to George Bush and Dick Cheney this month. At each stop, Edwards said he's not sure what he'll do next. The former trial attorney did say he's not interested in returning to the law or serving on corporate boards. What he does want to do, he said, is keep working on the issues such as health care and poverty that he's talked about since starting his own presidential campaign in January 2003, whether through a foundation or some other avenue.

He left little doubt that he's considering another run in 2008.

"We have significant work left to do in this country. ... This fight's not over," he told the government center audience. "When I say this fight's not over, I'm not through fighting either."

Earlier, Edwards reflected about the last campaign.

He said Republicans successfully tapped into the "cultural populism" on issues such as gay marriage that played well throughout the South and in much of the rest of the country. Edwards said Bush used those issues to divide, adding that Democrats have to talk more about religion and other "common values" that people can relate to.

"We can't be a party of elites and intellectuals," he said. "People have to believe we're on their side," he said. "... People have this instinctive radar for that. They know whether you respect them. They know whether you respect their way of life."

He declined to say whether he thought the outcome would have been different had he, not Kerry, been atop the ticket. Nor did he say what the campaign should have done differently.

But, he said, "The most important thing ... that we need in a future presidential campaign is a message that's clear and strong and a candidate who believes it to his or her soul. It's the core of a successful run for the presidency. Otherwise it sounds like today's message or yesterday's poll numbers."

Kerry's campaign was often criticized for lacking focus.

Edwards said his role changed after his October debate with Vice President Cheney. Instead of going mainly to rural America, campaign officials, apparently impressed by his performance, asked him to campaign more in urban areas around the country.

After the debate, it was Elizabeth Edwards who reminded Cheney -- who said he had never met the senator -- that the two had once sat next to each other at a prayer breakfast. Edwards said he intentionally decided not to call Cheney on it during the debate.

"What was going through my head was, 'This is bull,' " he said. "If I debate Dick Cheney on whether we met before, does that really rise to the level of what we should be talking about?"

At the government center, Edwards ticked off a list of accomplishments during his six years in office, including the patients' bill of rights, helping get flood relief for North Carolinians and this year's tobacco buyout. While farmers credit Edwards' staff with helping on the long-sought buyout, the state's junior senator, Republican Sen. Elizabeth Dole, was credited with most of the heavy lifting.

"He'll be remembered (for) missed opportunities," said state GOP Chairman Ferrell Blount. "He's obviously a very talented young fellow. He could have made a choice to stay in Washington rather than to go all over the country to run for president ... He's going to find that people don't have a lot of room for a vice presidential candidate who lost."

Before his supporters, Edwards still sounded like a candidate, even slipping into his stump speech.

"Some of you have heard me talk about 'two Americas,' " he said. "I don't believe we should live in a country with two health care systems."

He picked up his criticism of President Bush, describing what he called the "colossal intelligence failure" in Iraq and the delays in acting on the recommendations of the 9-11 Commission.

"The president wants intelligence reform, but he doesn't take the steps to see that those reforms are (enacted)," he said.

Edwards had a different take when Charlotte Mayor Pro Tem Patrick Cannon asked him how he'd like to be remembered.

"First of all, I don't want to be remembered," he said. "When all is said and done, I want people to see me as somebody who fought for the regular guy, who fought against special interests. ... I'm proud of what I did."

Though there were few trappings of his presidential and vice presidential campaigns, there were hints of the careful advance work that attended those campaigns. On the wall behind him at the government center was a blue and gold seat of the U.S. Senate. He stood on his mark, a strip of black tape between two flags in front of a council dais where the mayor's name had been temporarily replaced by "Edwards, U.S. Senate."

For Edwards, it was Fan Appreciation Night. One was Natalie Erdman, 17. She had last seen Edwards last January in New Hampshire, where she and her father, Charlotte lawyer David Erdman, helped man a campaign phone bank and attended a rally.

Another was Rochelle McColl, who took the microphone to offer a final compliment.

"You're still the most gorgeous man in the Senate," she said.

How's Elizabeth?

Elizabeth Edwards is "responding well" to her first two chemotherapy treatments for breast cancer, Sen. John Edwards said during Monday's visit to Charlotte.

"The doctors are encouraged," he said.

She was diagnosed in Boston the day after this month's election.

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Global lectures, teaching possible for Edwards

By STEVE HARTSOE, Associated Press Writer
November 30, 2004 5:57 pm

GREENSBORO, N.C. -- He hasn't said it outright, but John Edwards sounds every bit a candidate for the Democratic presidential nomination in 2008.

"I'm not through fighting," Edwards told about 140 supporters Tuesday at the Greensboro Historical Museum.

But his pledge to improve health care, jobs and national security won't be done as an elected official.

With the presidential campaign over and his term in the U.S. Senate ending in January, Edwards said he will pursue new avenues to keep his populist message in the spotlight.

That could include working with policy groups, foundations, speaking around the world or teaching at universities, he said.

"There are a lot of ways to make a difference," Edwards said, adding that he won't return to his previous career as a litigator.

His priority for now is taking care of his wife Elizabeth, who is being treated for breast cancer, he said.

Edwards, on the second day of his three-day "Thank You Tar Heels Tour" of the state, was confident he could play a relevant role in the future of the country and his party.

He said he was disappointed at losing his home state to President Bush on Nov. 2.

Edwards added that Democrats can do a better job of convincing voters in Bush-supporting red states that his party shares their values of religious faith and hard work.

"I think it got across to some people, but that doesn't mean we can't do better," he told reporters.

Edwards, who chose not to seek a second six-year term in the Senate to pursue a presidential bid, has been criticized for missing Senate votes to campaign.

He defended his absence, saying he believed North Carolina benefited from representation on a national ticket.

Edwards listed his key achievements in the Senate as co-sponsoring a patient's bill of rights and securing aid to storm victims and laid-off workers.

Laurie Gengenbach of Greensboro said she won't support a 2008 presidential run by Edwards because he and Kerry didn't challenge election results she called fraudulent.

"He's just completely silent," she said. "It needs to be looked at."

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An odyssey ends

Edwards' three-day tour of the state departs from the mania of the campaign trail



Sen. John Edwards talks to supporters from the stairs of the N.C. Museum of History in Raleigh. His three-day tour ends today in Wilmington.

Staff Photos by Robert Willett

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By VALERIE BAUERLEIN, Washington Correspondent

John Edwards closed his one term in the U.S. Senate much as he began, with a tour of the state, a two-handed handshake, a speech, a smile.

Like before, he rode in a solitary sport utility vehicle. Like before, he was accompanied by the smallest of staffs - someone to drive, someone to carry folders, someone to hold the cards meant for his wife, Elizabeth. When he flew, he took regular planes.

"The reason I am here today is to say thank you for having the honor and privilege of representing you," Edwards said Tuesday evening in Raleigh.

Yes, the "thank-you" tour was a lot like Edwards' tour of the state after he was elected in 1998.

It was the in-between that was the odyssey.

While he was on the presidential campaign trail, Edwards chartered private jets with rows of security guards and reporters. He traveled in a line of eight to 10 cars, so many that Edwards' 4-year-old son, Jack, would line up his toy cars and call them his motorcade.

Edwards said he welcomed the homecoming and the change in pace.

"You go from 120 miles an hour to slowing down fast," he said. "It's a fairly significant change."

The change has its upside, namely getting rid of the entourage.

"The Secret Service guys are great, but having to go with the Secret Service guy to the bathroom got a little old," Edwards said in a meeting Tuesday with editors at The News & Observer.

At the N.C. Museum of History in downtown Raleigh, Edwards spoke Tuesday night to 400 people, his largest crowd so far on the three-day tour that ends today in Wilmington.

It was not the teeming hordes of the summer and fall, when Edwards, as John Kerry's running mate on the Democratic ticket, visited three states a day.

But Edwards told listeners that it was North Carolinians who kept him going as he ran for the

Democratic presidential nomination and then the vice presidency.

"You have no idea what it meant when it was 20 below in New Hampshire, seeing a good North Carolina face knocking on a door, asking for help," Edwards said.

He said he knows he gave his Senate work short shrift because of the campaign, but he believes the trade-off was worth it. "I think there's value in North Carolina having a voice in this national debate," he said.

Edwards said he will continue to serve working-class people in whatever comes next.

For now, he is in limbo.

His wife, Elizabeth, was diagnosed with breast cancer the day after the November election. Edwards has accompanied her through her first two treatments. He said he plans to stay at her side through the spring, when she is scheduled to complete the regimen.

Edwards said he plans to continue in public life. It could be an organization, he said, or through a public policy institute, or something else entirely.

In Greensboro, Edwards spoke to 200 people in the auditorium of the city's Historical Museum. Edwards took the stage to a standing ovation from loyal fans -- local elected leaders, college students with hair dyed blue and retirees in reindeer sweatshirts.

Outside the museum, much of the lunch crowd didn't know or care about the visit. Wade Haynes, 45, was busy looking for work.

"He seems like a pretty honest fella, as far as politicians go," Haynes said. "But I don't have much faith in the system anymore."

In Raleigh, Edwards had a lobby full of fans, huddled under a model of the Wright brothers' plane.

Bobbie Edwards said she was as proud of her son as she could possibly be. But don't ask her what he'll do next.

"I'm not ready to go there yet," she said. "But whatever he does, he'll do a good job. He'll put his heart and soul in it."

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Edwards makes Pitt stop during tour to say thanks

By Ginger Livingston, The Daily Reflector

Bearing books for autographing, ticket stubs and passes from the Democratic National Convention, more than 200 people showed up in Greenville on Wednesday to greet former Democratic vice presidential candidate John Edwards.

The outgoing senator's appearance at Sheppard Memorial Library was part of a three-day, six-city tour of the state this week. It drew well-wishers from Pitt and surrounding counties.

Because Edwards decided to pursue the presidency then vice presidency, he didn't run for a second Senate term and will leave office early next month.

However, Edwards promised he would continue to work for improved health care and a better economy.

"This fight is not over," he said to the applause and cheers from the audience. "Not only is the fight not over, I'm not finished with this fight."

Jane Phillips of Kinston asked Edwards the question he has deflected all week.

"Senator, are you going to run for public office again?" she asked.

"I'm going to stay involved once we get Elizabeth well," he said.

As he started his speech Edwards updated his audience on the health of his wife, who was diagnosed with breast cancer the day after the Nov. 2 election.

"She is wonderful, and she is going to go through her treatment and get better," he said. "She is a role model for women everywhere."

In an interview later with The Daily Reflector's editorial board, Edwards said his options could involve teaching, working with a public policy institute on promoting job creation and health care improvements, and speaking before domestic and international groups.

While Edwards offered no specifics, some audience members had definite ideas.

"As soon as the wife gets well, we want you to go back," said Willie Gilchrist, Halifax County Schools superintendent.

Edwards and his staff were responsible for helping secure \$6 million in grants

for a new library, dropout prevention and other programs for Gilchrist's low-wealth school system, Gilchrist said.

People started lining up at 10 a.m. for Edwards' 11:30 a.m. appearance. As the crowd grew, Edwards' staff and library officials worked to rearrange the meeting space to accommodate everyone.

"He's a very fine young man. I feel very positive about him," Carmen Albea of Greenville said. "I admire the way he and John Kerry went about running."

While Edwards' tenure as an elected official was brief, Albea said he did as much for North Carolina as many of the state's longtime representatives.

Despite losing his Senate seat, Edwards' supporters didn't fault him for his presidential aspirations.

"He gave us hope, something to look forward to, a hope for change," said Tina Rodriguez of Beaufort, who traveled to Greenville with four friends to get Edwards to sign campaign memorabilia.

Beatriz Pesez, who is learning English at Pitt Community College, worked her way through the crowd to get Edwards to sign her dictionary.

"I love democracy, and I liked him before he was with Kerry," she said, wrestling with her new language to form her thoughts. "His speeches were true."

Suzan Teel, another Beaufort resident, said Edwards brought a "North Carolina" sensibility to the race, talking about issues such as raising the minimum wage, providing better health care and securing jobs.

"I thought it was important for regular North Carolina to have a voice in the Senate," Edwards told the audience.

Starting his speech 30 minutes late, Edwards shared his biography with a crowd already well-versed in his history — son of a small-town mill worker who became the first in his family to attend college.

He then recounted work in the Senate: co-authoring the Patients' Bill of Rights with Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Edward Kennedy, D-Mass; securing funding for victims of the 1999 flood; championing legislation that sped the process for getting generic medication to the marketplace.

"I was proud to take the values that we have in this state to the nation," Edwards said.

In the coming years, he said, the United States needs to bring other countries into the rebuilding of Iraq, competing in the global economy by raising standards for the American worker and upgrading public education to produce technologically savvy workers.

The people from Beaufort were enthralled.

"The things he said ... are more true now than they were six months ago," Rodriguez said.

"I feel if he can stay in the spotlight I would support him in a 2008 campaign," James Lewis of Beaufort said.

David Southcombe of Greenville said he thinks Edwards is a viable candidate for president in 2008.

"What complicates it is Kerry is thinking about running in 2008," he said. He questioned how the Democratic Party would respond to former running mates campaigning against each other.

As he signed autographs and posed for photographs, audience members offered Edwards and his wife, who wasn't present, prayers and support.

Former Pitt County Commissioner Terry Shank told Edwards about her success in battling breast cancer and encouraged him to remain optimistic.

She told him people are willing to support him in the future.

"A lot of us are there for you when you're ready to come back," she said.

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Edwards: Nothing 'to complain about'

The Daily Reflector

His party lost the presidential election, and he is leaving the U.S. Senate after one term, but John Edwards said his run for the White House was worth it.

"Yes!" he declared, sitting straight up in his chair, then leaning forward to address the question.

"If you are me, and you grow up in a little town in North Carolina, and you hope to go to college then law school like you always dreamed ... are elected to the Senate and then end up running for the presidency and vice presidency, you don't have anything to complain about," he said.

During a town hall meeting in Greenville and subsequent interview with The Daily Reflector editorial board, Edwards addressed a variety of topics:

— On running for office: "You have to tell people who you are," Edwards said. Ultimately, voting is a personal choice, and people look beyond stances on policy and issues when selecting their leader.

Candidates have to voice values and "really believe in something and stand up for it."

— On the president and the Democrats: "George Bush divided the county; he was very good at the politics of division," Edwards said. "He used hot-button issues to drive voters away from Kerry. In the future, the Democratic Party has to set the groundwork for the national debate and define its values as hard work, family and faith.

— Edwards said he will soon meet the Republican taking his seat, Senator-elect Richard Burr, to discuss the issues awaiting him.

Edwards said he hadn't spent enough time with Burr to offer an assessment of the man. He said he was happy that he and Sen. Elizabeth Dole, R-N.C., had established a close relationship.

"I would like them to show independence from the White House," he said. He hopes they help implement the president's educational reform program, No Child Left Behind, by sending school systems money.

— Having your family on the campaign trail offers valuable support to presidential candidates, Edwards said, but during a stop in Milwaukee youngsters on stage distracted the crowd from his speech.

"I noticed that no one was watching me," he said. "Someone had given my

children, the two younger ones, cheeseheads," he said, referring to the foam replicas of cheese wedges worn as hats by Green Bay Packer fans.

Emma Clair and Jack were inadvertently entertaining the audience by using their new hats to butt heads.



12.2.04

"Thank you Tar heels Tour" ends in Port City

Wednesday night it looked as if John Edwards was still on the campaign trail, but to the contrary, his stop in Wilmington was the last of his three day "Thank you Tar heels Tour".

"It's not just great to be back in North Carolina, boy is it great to be back in North Carolina, but it's also great to be back in Wilmington," the senator said to a packed crowd at the County Commission Chambers at the Old County Courthouse in Downtown Wilmington.

Edwards toured several cities across the state, thanking his supporters for putting him in the U.S. Senate, and for showing their confidence that he was capable of ascending to the White House.

"I'm proud to have served you in the Senate. I'm also proud to have gone out and campaigned for the presidency and the vice presidency on the behalf of North Carolina, because I thought it was time, for the first time in more than a century, that North Carolina have someone in the national spotlight."

Senator Edwards leaves the Senate in January. The former trial lawyer says he will not return to the courtroom, but where he goes from here remains to be seen. Right now he says his top priority is his wife, Elizabeth, who was diagnosed with breast cancer the day after the election.

"She is the strongest person I have ever known, period," says Senator Edwards. "She has shown great strength through all of this."

Edwards' supporters expressed their concern and support for his wife Elizabeth Wednesday night, and they also made it clear they want him back on the campaign trail in four years.

"Would you consider an Edwards/ Clinton ticket for 2008?" one woman in the crowd asked.

"I've had a number of these things in the past three days, and this is the furthest I've gone without someone having asked that question," the senator joked, drawing laughter from the captivated audience.

Senator Edwards never committed to another run in 2008, but he never ran from the issue either. For now, he returns to a more simple life, perhaps spending more time at his vacation home at Figure Eight Island.

The simpler life also means the senator can go to the restroom without the Secret Service with him, and he says that is always a good thing.

Reported by [Frances Weller](#)



Senator John Edwards



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Article published Dec 2, 2004

Edwards brings 'thank you' to Port City

He still has his trademark smile, boyish good looks, and that intrinsic ability to connect with the masses.

But come early January when his six-year term is up, Sen. John Edwards, D-N.C., is out of a job.

That uncertainty, however, didn't hold the senator back Wednesday from thanking Southeastern North Carolina for its support during his stint in Washington.

It also didn't stop an overflowing crowd of nearly 250 supporters in New Hanover County's Old County Courthouse from thanking him back.

Dubbed his "Thank You Tar Heels Tour," Wilmington was Mr. Edwards' last stop on a six-city tour of the state that started in Asheville on Monday.

With a sprinkling of Kerry/Edwards T-shirts and buttons in the crowd, the former Democratic vice presidential candidate stuck to many of the points that became trademarks of his "Two Americas" campaign.

Mr. Edwards said he intended to keep pushing issues like affordable healthcare and helping young people pay for college.

"This fight isn't over," he said, a comment that brought the crowd to its feet. "And not only is this fight not over, I'm not done fighting."

But where does Mr. Edwards go from here to keep fighting, especially if he intends to stay a player for 2008?

"That's really the million-dollar question right now," said Tom Barth, chair of the political science department at the University of North Carolina at Wilmington.

During an interview at the Star-News prior to Wednesday's event downtown, Mr. Edwards said he's had multiple offers ranging from teaching positions to jobs at public-policy groups. But he said that he wouldn't focus on his future, public or private, until his wife Elizabeth – who is responding well to treatment for breast cancer – is healthy.

Helen Worthy, chairwoman of the New Hanover County Democratic Party, said she feels Mr. Edwards would be viewed as insensitive if he made any comments about his future with his wife battling cancer and his young family just about to move to a new home in Chapel Hill.

"I don't think he can go beyond that point until all of that is settled," she said. "But I wouldn't be at all surprised if politics isn't out of his blood."

Dr. Barth said Mr. Edwards, if he intends to stay a viable contender for 2008, needs to remain in the public eye.

But he added that without a pulpit, like a Senate seat, to showcase his positions, he could have trouble doing that – ala Al Gore since the 2000 election.

"I think it could be a real struggle for him," Dr. Barth said.

A suggestion by Jessica Holland, of Wilmington, for a possible Edwards/Hillary Clinton ticket in 2008 drew cheers from the crowd and smiles from the senator.

But Mr. Edwards, like he has done throughout his tour of North Carolina, remained noncommittal about his political future.

Dr. Barth, however, said the biggest problem Mr. Edwards could face if he's interested in running in 2008 is his lack of a track record.

"I think the reality is that his legacy as a senator from North Carolina isn't a particularly sterling one," he said. "I don't get a sense that he really established himself in the Senate." That leaves his legacy so far dominated by his place on the ill-fated presidential ticket with U.S. Sen. John Kerry, D-Mass, where he couldn't even carry his home state for the Democrats.

"I think his time as a U.S. senator from North Carolina will be a footnote in that," Dr. Barth said.

What Mr. Edwards wasn't shy about were the challenges facing the Democratic Party as it looks to move forward.

"Voters need to know that we believe in most of the same things they do," he said, alluding to a criticism that the Democrats are out of touch with mainstream Americans over things like morals and religion.

Sen. Edwards added that the party also needs to reach out to all parts of the country, "not just those in red states or blue states because we're all more alike than we are different."

He also said that the party needs to develop new leaders.

But for people crowding the old county courthouse Wednesday, they think they already have their Democratic leader of the future.

"He has the kind of charisma that people identify with," Ms. Worthy said. "He's touchable."

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Posted on Mon, Nov. 29, 2004

The Charlotte Observer

TOWARD 2008 | JOHN EDWARDS THINKS HE SEES WHAT DEMOCRATS NEED TO DO TO WIN

For outgoing senator, it's `what's next?'

TIM FUNK
Observer Washington Bureau

WASHINGTON - Picture a Democratic presidential candidate who talks openly about his faith in God, stresses national security and reaches out to those Red State voters.

Picture John Edwards in 2008?

In an interview with the Observer last week, Edwards sounded like a candidate who had already learned the lessons of the 2004 election -- a race George W. Bush won by attracting big support from regular churchgoers, from rural and small-town residents and from voters who said they wanted a president who would protect them and their families from terrorist attacks.

Edwards, who will give up his Senate seat and return to North Carolina next year, isn't ready just yet to declare another bid for the White House. His focus right now, he said, is to help his wife, Elizabeth, beat her breast cancer.

But the Democrats' 2004 vice presidential candidate, who's on everybody's short-list of likely 2008 presidential contenders, has definite ideas about where his party needs to go and the kind of candidate who can get it there.

Today, Edwards, 51, begins a three-day tour of North Carolina to spread this message and thank constituents for letting him represent his home state in the Senate for the last six years. He'll be in Asheville and Charlotte today, Greensboro and Raleigh on Tuesday, and Greenville and Wilmington on Wednesday.

Edwards says Democrats need to make clear they have the same values as the people Edwards grew up with in the Carolinas. Values like family, hard work, personal responsibility and, yes, religious faith.

"I wish we'd had better chances, better opportunities (in the 2004 campaign) for me to talk about what my personal values are," Edwards said. "How important my relationship with God is, how important my faith is in our day-to-day lives, the struggles my family's had in the past, plus what Elizabeth is facing now."

Going forward, he added, Democrats also need to reach out to those who voted for Bush: "In order for us to unite the country . . . those voters have to believe that our values -- my values and the values of other Democratic leaders -- are the same values they believe in. That means we have to be touching them, reaching out to them. And that includes the Red States. Very much."

Lots of proposals and offers

Edwards made it clear in the interview that, even without a forum in the Senate, he plans to keep his voice loud and his profile high in the coming years. He won't say how he'll do that, only that "we've had lots of proposals and offers out there . . . The bottom line is: I have to sort my way through all of that stuff and figure out what makes the most sense and what's the best way to fight for these things I care about."

Things like "keeping this country safe, protecting the country from things like terrorism, spread of nuclear weapons, spread of weapons of mass destruction."

He listed two other, more perennial Democratic, issues he plans to keep talking about: the health care crisis and poverty.

So don't expect Edwards to disappear from public view. He said he expects to keep giving speeches around the country -- though he has no current plans to visit Iowa or New Hampshire.

Publishing another book, he said, "is certainly a possibility."

And with Edwards and his family planning to build a home near Chapel Hill -- the bluest part of Red State North Carolina -- doing something at his law school alma mater University of North Carolina or some other prestigious school "would be on the list that I'd want to think about. But that's only one piece of this. You have to think of it as part of a bigger effort to further these causes."

Whatever he does, Edwards said, his goal will be to stay in the media spotlight -- a must for a presidential candidate, though Edwards prefers to cast himself as a champion of issues.

"It's hard to affect changes that need to be done and need to be put in place if you're not out in the public," he said. "So, in order to do the good work that needs to be done, Elizabeth and I both will be very involved in the public area."

No victory lap for Democrats

Edwards had hoped his post-election return to North Carolina would be a victory lap, with him headed back to Washington as John Kerry's vice president and fellow Democrat Erskine Bowles preparing to take over his seat in the Senate.

Instead, North Carolina elected Republican Rep. Richard Burr to succeed Edwards and contributed to Bush's victory by giving him 56 percent of the state's vote -- the same as in 2000 -- and all of its 15 electoral votes.

What happened?

"We knew going in that he'd be a strong candidate in North Carolina," Edwards said of Bush. "The truth of the matter is that, over the long term, it's very important for both North Carolina Democrats and national Democrats to focus on the kind of things that North Carolinians are concerned about. ... It's very important for that (discussion of faith and family) to be part of our national Democratic dialogue."

Is that a slap at Kerry and his campaign team?

"I'm not interested in going backward and analyzing what happened," he said. "But I know that going forward, that's going to be an important part of what we're doing."

Edwards wouldn't comment when asked whether Sen. Hillary Rodham Clinton -- another likely 2008 contender -- could sell in the Red States or whether Democrats should nominate a Southerner next time.

He also defended his decision to run on the Kerry ticket instead of seeking a second Senate term -- a plan of action that caused him to miss scores of roll call votes in the upper chamber in 2003 and 2004.

"It's been over a century since North Carolina has had anybody on a (national political) ticket," he said. "And my belief was that the best way to get the country on the course it needed to be on was to have somebody different in the White House. ... The voices of most ordinary Americans, regular Americans -- the kind of people I grew up with in Robbins -- weren't being heard anymore. Their interests weren't being fought for. For me, those were the deciding factors."

Also in the interview, Edwards said that:

- Working on the Patients Bill of Rights and relief for N.C. victims of Hurricane Floyd were his most satisfying accomplishments as a senator. Edwards co-wrote the bill allowing patients to sue their HMOs with Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Ted Kennedy, D-Mass. The trio managed to get it passed in the Senate, but not the House.

"I ran on it in '98," he said, "and still think there's a good chance it can become law."

In the aftermath of Hurricane Floyd in 1999, he said, "I was spending time on the weekends down in North Carolina with all these communities and families that had been devastated, and then coming back up here on Monday and pushing all the other senators to give North Carolina the help that it needed."

- He spoke recently to two N.C. Republicans who campaigned for a Bush victory: Sen.-elect Burr and Sen. Elizabeth Dole.

Dole, he said, "was very sweet. She called a couple of times, and I saw her off the Senate floor (on Nov. 20), after the vote. We gave each other a big hug, and she said she's praying for Elizabeth every day, which I believe."

Edwards said he didn't know Burr very well before, but "I congratulated him and told him I wanted to do everything in my power to make this transition work because it was important to the state that both of us love."

- Life after the campaign trail includes a lot more time with his kids, especially Emma Claire, 6, and Jack, 4. "Nothing gives me as much pleasure," he said. "I take them to the park, read to them -- everything that parents do with their kids. Elizabeth took them to Toys `R' Us."

He also gets to sleep more -- five hours was a lot when he was hurtling from city to city during the campaign. And, with the Secret Service gone, "I get to run by myself now, which I kind of like."

- As of last week, his wife had had two treatments for her cancer.

"She's doing pretty well," said Edwards, who goes with her to the chemotherapy sessions. "She's responding well to the treatment so far, and the doctors are optimistic, and we're optimistic."

Edwards also said that Election Day and the day after, when they had to absorb both a loss at the polls and a cancer diagnosis, were hard.

"But the odd part about it is that we never doubted -- Elizabeth and I -- that this (illness) was something we could get through and overcome."

And the election loss?

"For a country boy from Robbins, N.C., being able to be a U.S. senator running on a national ticket -- it's beyond anything I would have ever dreamed of. It's hard to feel anything but good about that extraordinary opportunity."

Edwards in the Senate

- When Hurricane Floyd pounded North Carolina in September 1999, Edwards went looking for federal help: He called the White House, the secretary of agriculture, FEMA. When Congress didn't come through with enough money for hard-hit N.C. farmers, Edwards threatened to shut down the government by objecting to a temporary funding resolution that needed unanimous consent. That pried loose some money.

- Edwards surprised N.C. bankers -- in a good way -- when he got a seat on the Senate Banking Committee. He also surprised them -- in a bad way -- when he quit the panel after just 15 months. But, in between, Edwards was widely credited with playing a key role in hammering out a bipartisan compromise on the so-called Gramm-Leach-Bliley Act. Bankers had tried for 20 years to get Congress to pass the bill, which allowed banks to sell insurance, mutual funds and other financial products.

- Fresh from the courtroom, longtime trial lawyer Edwards was named one of the Democrats to preside over the deposing of Monica Lewinsky and other witnesses in President Clinton's 1999 impeachment trial. He also wowed fellow senators when he offered a no-notes argument for Clinton's acquittal. Later, in 2002, Edwards got applause from Democratic interest groups -- and boos from those allied with the GOP -- for his tough questioning of Charles Pickering, a controversial judicial nominee from President Bush, during a Senate Judiciary Committee hearing.

- In 2003, Edwards and Sen. Elizabeth Dole, R-N.C., broke a 12-year political impasse that had left North Carolina without any judges on the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals. Sitting side by side, the state's two senators appeared before the Judiciary Committee to support President Bush's nomination of Raleigh lawyer Allyson Duncan, who also became the first black woman to serve on the Richmond, Va.-based court. But Dole criticized Edwards' decision to block consideration of three other Bush nominees for N.C. judgeships.

- Edwards missed only three of 374 roll call votes in 1999, his first year in office. In 2004, his last year, he missed 126 of 215. Among the bills he favored but wasn't there to vote for were a spending measure to authorize a \$10.1 billion tobacco buyout.

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Edwards considers next steps

By VALERIE BAUERLEIN, Washington
Correspondent

WASHINGTON -- Sen. John Edwards said he wants to keep fighting for health care, homeland security and relief for the poor, and he will decide in the next few weeks how he'll do that.

Edwards said last week that he is deciding whether to start his own political organization or go another route.

"We've had lots of proposals and offers," said Edwards, in a telephone interview from his Georgetown home. "I'm trying to decide right now what to do, what makes the most sense, what will allow me to do the things I think are the most important."

Edwards said his first priority is helping his wife get well. Elizabeth Edwards is fighting breast cancer and had her second treatment Tuesday.

Edwards is closing his Senate office, leaving the job he held for six years. He begins his "Thank You Tarheels Tour" of North Carolina today with stops in six cities over three days. He conducted a similar tour when he was elected as a political novice in 1998, holding town hall meetings, visiting newspapers, talking with constituents.

"I'll be making sure they know I appreciate them, talking about some of the things that I've learned," he said.

Edwards is closing a tumultuous year. He vaulted from the back of the Democratic pack to a strong finish in the early caucuses for the presidential nomination. He withdrew from the race in the spring in a bittersweet rally in his hometown, Raleigh, and was back in the summer as Sen. John Kerry's pick for vice president.

Last month, the same day Edwards and Kerry gave their concession speech after losing the presidential race, a doctor confirmed Elizabeth Edwards' diagnosis.

The family spent Thanksgiving in Washington and will spend Christmas in Raleigh. Their elder daughter, Cate, is moving to New York City to begin a job with Vanity Fair magazine, which she put off to campaign.

The rest of the family plans to live in Washington through early June, so their two young children can finish the school year, and Elizabeth Edwards can finish her treatment regimen.

Edwards was coy about what he might do after the chaos quiets. But he indicated that another bid for president is a possibility.

When asked what issues he'll be working on a year from now, he answered without hesitation: national security, health care.



Edwards' visits to six N.C. cities begins today.

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Edwards said he would be active in helping his party regroup. He said he'd emphasize the need to stake out Democratic territory by addressing faith and values -- territory typically claimed by Republicans and particularly critical to voters in November's election.

"It's something that needs to be an important part of what we're talking about," Edwards said.

John Moylan, a Columbia, S.C., lawyer who was the director of Edwards' campaign in that state, said that Edwards still has the presidential stuff.

"If there were a lesson from this past campaign, it's that we have to have a candidate that relates to middle America," Moylan said. "There's no one in the Democratic Party, and I'm not sure there's anyone in America, that does that as well as John Edwards."

Ferrell Guillory, an expert on Southern politics at UNC-Chapel Hill, compared Edwards' position now to that of Ronald Reagan in 1976, after Reagan lost the GOP nomination to Gerald Ford. Reagan regrouped, made speeches and increased his visibility.

"Edwards is on the mountain," Guillory said. "He's got to hack his way up the slope. But nobody's knocked him off yet."

A detractor scoffs

But one North Carolina Republican leader said that Edwards is indeed at the bottom, unlikely to scale the political heights again.

"He'll fade into the shadows of history," said Ferrell Blount, chairman of the state GOP. "He'll be as stale as yesterday's bread. How many vice presidential candidates can you think of that lost but came back to win the presidency? I can't think of any."

He said Edwards squandered his six Senate years running for president, and has no significant legislative accomplishments or influence on policy. "I don't know of any legacy that he's got because I don't know of anything he's done for North Carolina," Blount said.

Edwards said he has heard the grumbling that North Carolina has had only had one senator. "I would respectfully disagree with that," Edwards said. "I worked very hard for North Carolina in some very specific ways. I also gave North Carolina a voice on the national stage, which I think matters."

Edwards said he is proud of his record, particularly writing a Patients Bill of Rights. He said he is optimistic that President Bush will sign a version soon.

Edwards says the presidential campaign made the country aware of North Carolina and its problems, particularly the loss of farming and textile jobs.

The family will move back to North Carolina for good in early June, Edwards said, either to their home in Raleigh or to land they have bought in Orange County. He said he can't wait. "My tension level and my blood pressure goes down just as soon as I get there. I like everything about it, I like the food, I like the fact that I have family and so many friends there," he said. "It's just coming home."

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LOCAL NEWS

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Edwards Says His Farewell to State

BY JOHN CHAPPELL: Staff Writer

There is no turning back for Sen. John Edwards.

He may be leaving the Senate after a single term, but he is not returning to the law practice that earned him a fortune as one of the most successful attorneys in the country.

"Oh, I am not," he said with a chuckle during a telephone interview Tuesday. "I can tell you that."

As the Democratic vice-presidential nominee, Edwards became the first North Carolinian to be on a national ticket in more than a cen-tury. Despite losing the election, he intends to carry on his fight on issues that took him into the arena in the first place.

"My heart is now in public service," he said. "I love this country, and I love North Carolina. I want to do all I can to make it better."

Edwards is on a farewell swing through the state, thanking supporters for the six years they gave him in Washington. He visited Asheville and Charlotte Monday, Greensboro and Raleigh on Tuesday, and is in Greenville and Wilmington today.

He talks about the same issues that brought him into public life: the economy, education, national security and a looming crisis in health care.

The country faces serious challenges, he says. Recent reports about torture at Guantanamo and denial of guarantees in the Bill of Rights to detainees concern him.

"The Bill of Rights is the heart and soul of this country," he said. "We need judges that will protect people's freedoms and individual rights. That is what makes America what it is. As long as we have people who have the strength to stand up for these issues, we can protect them."

Though he is leaving the Senate, Edwards said he will continue his fight for things like medical care for all Americans, help for struggling young people trying to get college educations, better national security, more jobs, a balanced budget.

None of these fights is as important as one much closer to home.

Ever on his mind is his wife, Elizabeth, who has breast cancer. They found out the last day of the campaign. Even as they embraced on the historic platform at Boston's Faneuil Hall as Sen. John Kerry prepared to concede the election, both knew what they might be facing.

Strong Faith

As he hugged his wife, Edwards' face showed tender concern.

"Of course I was very, very worried about Elizabeth there," he said. "We both thought we knew what they were going to find. We weren't surprised by it. But still, it was hugely in my thoughts up there on that day, as you might expect. It was a combination of the election results and worry about

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Elizabeth.

"But we have had tough days. In one of her interviews she said, 'We've had tougher days. We can deal with this.'"

Medical tests done that afternoon confirmed their fears.

"You know, it is serious stuff," Edwards said. "She is going through what millions of women have gone through in this country. She has got breast cancer, but she is handling it very well."

She was at home with their two younger children, Emma Claire, 6, and Jack, 4, as Edwards traveled the state on his thank-you trip.

"She is doing well," he said. "You know I am traveling across the state today. I just talked to her five minutes ago, and she was feeling good about how things are going. She has had a couple of treatments already. She is responding very well. The doctors are optimistic, and we are optimistic."

Daily prayer has always been a source of strength in their family. It is something he learned growing up in Robbins where his parents, Wallace and Bobbie Edwards, have always been staunch members of the First Baptist Church.

"My faith, my daily prayers get me through each day," he said. "It is enormously important to me. It is important in times of difficulty, but it is important to me when things are going well, too. Faith has played a huge role in my life, and in Elizabeth's life. It always will."

'Turn Ideas Into Action'

Everybody asks him what he will do once he leaves the Senate.

He will keep on, he says. He will continue his campaign to win better conditions for others on things like health care and jobs.

"Many people don't have health-care coverage, plus the rise in health-care costs for those who do have it takes so much of people's paycheck anymore that it is hard for people to get ahead," Edwards said. "I hope to be involved in that issue. Also, the education issues that I have worked hard on. Jobs, which you know has been a big issue in North Carolina. And national security issues. I hope to be involved in all those areas."

You do not have to be a U.S. senator to be involved, he said.

"There are lots of ways to do it," he said. "You can be involved in foundations. You can be involved in public policy groups that work on these issues. You can also be involved in trying to turn ideas into action."

One area important to him is making it possible for others to have what he was the first in his family to have: a college education.

"You know, I had this proposal that we allow young people the first year of college tuition free if they were willing to work," he said. "I would like to find a way actually to have pilot programs to do that, so we see that it can work. That way we can expand it and use it in a real way as a nation."

He isn't talking about leading discussions.

"I don't want this to be just a group of people sitting around thinking about what needs to happen," he said. "We need to put some of these ideas into practice. I think we can. I know we can with the right kind of leadership."

His Moore County home town of Robbins has been as hard hit as any by job losses. He means to do something about that, as far as he can.

"They have been, and they need help," he said. "What they really need is economic development. They need jobs, jobs that will support the people who live in that area. They are struggling. Obviously home matters to you most. North Carolina matters to me most, and Robbins is my home in North Carolina. I am going to do everything I can to help folks in Robbins."

Edwards counts on having his wife's support once she beats breast cancer. Until then, he said, that is the family's most important battlefield.

"Obviously, to get Elizabeth well is the most important thing," he said. "Elizabeth and I both want to be involved in continuing the work we have been doing, whether it is health care or jobs. Doing the things that will make people's lives better."

He expects that his wife, after her recovery, will take an active public part working on these concerns.

"She needs to, and she will," he said. "She has made a really positive impression on millions of Americans. She describes herself: She is the anti-Barbie. The 'anti-Barbie.' I think that is about right. Like most women in the country. People relate to her, I think."

Need Fiscal Responsibility

Looking ahead, Edwards thinks the new Congress will actually pass some version of a patients' bill of rights.

"You know we got it passed in the Senate," he said. "Bush said in 2000, and said again in the 2004 campaign, that he is for a patients' bill of rights. There is a real chance of it getting signed into law. I am optimistic that we will be able to get that done, particularly since we were able to get bipartisan Democratic and Republican support for it in the Senate."

He fears increasing national debt and a falling dollar will hurt future generations if the national course continues unchanged.

"Fundamentally, what we have to do with our economy as a whole is we have to get back to balanced budgets and operating the government in a responsible way," he said. "We have gone from record surpluses to record deficits in the last four years."

Fiscal irresponsibility will mean a painful payback time one day, according to Edwards.

"Sooner or later, somebody is going to have to pay the price for that," he said. "We have a responsibility to our children and grandchildren to get back on the path to running government in a responsible way. That means not spending money we can't afford and not having tax cuts. I think that is a huge issue and will become a bigger issue as we go forward."



Edwards saying goodbye to Senate

11-29-04

By Eric Dyer Staff Writer
News & Record

In a few weeks, John Edwards will pack up the last of his belongings on Capitol Hill and close a short but active period as a public official.

What comes next for the departing U.S. senator is far from settled. He has job opportunities to consider, but other matters -- from building a new house to helping his wife fight cancer -- take precedence.

Starting today, Edwards will be back in his home state for a tour to express his gratitude to its residents for sending him to Washington, where he found a platform to become a national political figure.

"I want to make sure North Carolinians know how much I appreciate and am honored to have represented them," Edwards said in an interview last week to promote his three-day swing that includes a stop Tuesday in Greensboro.

Edwards is giving up a seat that no one lately has warmed for long. Democrat Sam Ervin's re-election in 1968 marked the last time someone kept the post for more than a term.

The switch continues in January when Senator-elect Richard Burr, a Republican, takes over.

But Edwards, unlike his predecessors, did not lose a bid for re-election. He gave up a chance to hold onto the seat so he could set his sights on the White House, first seeking the Democratic presidential nomination and later serving as John Kerry's running mate.

Those efforts certainly will dominate how Edwards is remembered as a senator. He regularly missed floor votes while stumping for support, which spurred charges that he neglected elective duties to pursue personal ambitions.

Edwards said his campaigns for higher office fit into his mission as a senator.

"I saw my job as helping make sure ... that the voices of regular North Carolinians were heard and someone was fighting for them and trying to help them," he said by telephone from his home in Georgetown, a tony section of Washington. "... North Carolina should have a powerful voice on the national front."

Charles Prysby, a UNCG political scientist, said the current polarized climate may color how people judge Edwards' performance as a senator.

"Democrats probably will say he had a lot of talent and good ideas, he was a good spokesman for the party, and we're sorry to see him go," Prysby said. "Republicans will say he didn't do much in the Senate, he only cared about running for president, and good riddance."

Indeed, state GOP Chairman Ferrell Blount summed up Edwards' tenure as one of "missed opportunities" to serve his state. But according to Scott Falmlen, state Democratic Party executive director, Edwards was "progressive and forward-looking," an antidote to the "backwardness" of another North Carolina senator, Republican Jesse Helms.

Made quick impression

Even without the campaign distractions, Edwards was not in a prime position to leave a huge mark on federal policy. He mostly labored as a junior member of the minority party, putting him at a disadvantage in an institution where seniority equals power.

Still, Edwards could not be classified as a typical freshman senator. He walked into the spotlight soon after entering office, when Democrats tapped the former trial lawyer to monitor witnesses being deposed in the impeachment proceedings against President Clinton. Colleagues from both parties were impressed with his abilities.

Edwards was a quick study of the Senate's unique customs. It helped him to maneuver and push pieces of his proposals into law, such as efforts to combat terrorism through tighter seaport security.

He also found the benefits of teaming with seasoned colleagues, as he did by working with Sens. John McCain, R-Ariz., and Ted Kennedy, D-Mass., to sponsor legislation that afforded patients greater rights when dealing with their health-insurance companies. The Senate passed the bill, but it went nowhere in the House.

Despite being rapped as derelict in his duties, Edwards apparently paid attention to the home folk. His office noted that he -- or, at least, staff working for him -- secured \$345 million in federal grants for North Carolina, tended to inquiries from more than 23,000 constituents and fought for financial aid to address natural disasters that hit the state, including Hurricane Floyd in 1999.

Edwards also ended a stalemate over North Carolina nominees to the 4th U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals when he and Republican Sen. Elizabeth Dole backed Allyson Duncan's candidacy for the bench.

But Edwards also borrowed a tactic from Helms to block several other judicial appointees that President Bush put forth. Dole criticized Edwards for this practice.

Nevertheless, Dole -- who campaigned for Bush as well as Burr -- offered gracious comments about Edwards. Through an aide, she called him "extremely talented and capable."

"She wishes all the best for him and his family, and they will be in her thoughts and prayers," said Dole spokesman Brian Nick.

Home, health priorities

Of paramount importance for Edwards now is making sure his wife, Elizabeth, overcomes breast cancer. She had the diagnosis confirmed earlier this month on the same day her husband

and Kerry conceded to Bush.

"Our first priority is to get her well," Edwards said.

The Edwardses plan to stay in Washington until next spring, when the cancer treatments are scheduled to end and their younger children -- Jack, 4, and Emma Claire, 6 -- finish the school year. Then, they will move back to North Carolina, where the family plans to build a house on 100 acres near Chapel Hill.

Edwards, who has a residence in Raleigh, said he and his wife sought "a more rural setting" with "more room for our kids." Some land has been cleared but nothing is going up yet, he said.

"I am proud of being from North Carolina, and I am very excited about being back there permanently," Edwards said.

Where he intends to live probably is less a point of curiosity than what the relatively young Edwards hopes to do with his time after he leaves the Senate. Head a think tank? Lead a college?

Edwards said he had proposals from lots of people. He would not spell out specifics, saying only: "We're sorting our way through all of that."

He also declined to talk about whether he hopes to stage a second run for president, perhaps in 2008 when Bush cannot seek re-election and the Democratic nomination is open.

Political observers have argued for months that they would be surprised if Edwards, 51, did not try again.

Edwards would face competition, but Raleigh attorney Ed Turlington noted that he already has a network of supporters and donors in place that he could tap immediately for a reprise campaign.

Yet Edwards' reputation might have taken a beating this year, making him a less attractive candidate. He was billed as a Democrat who could win Republican areas, but his presence on the ticket did not stop Bush from carrying North Carolina by 13 points -- the identical margin as in 2000.

Another downside for Edwards in a second attempt is he will lack the natural visibility that comes with being in office. However, Turlington emphasized, Ronald Reagan, Richard Nixon and Jimmy Carter went to the Oval Office directly from the private sector.

"History has shown us ... that it is possible to win the White House without holding an office," said Turlington, who was general chairman of Edwards' presidential campaign.

Whatever Edwards decides, he has plenty of time to "consider his options," said Falmlen, the Democratic Party official.

"I don't think we've seen or heard the last of John Edwards by any means," he said.

Edwards bids adieu, but only for a while

12-1-04

News & Record

Despite his fighting words, John Edwards was hardly in a combative mood during a visit to Greensboro Tuesday.

"This fight is not over," he told a friendly, standing-room-only crowd in the auditorium of the Greensboro Historical Museum. "Not only is the fight not over, I'm not through fighting."

Four weeks after the end of an exhausting and unsuccessful national campaign, however, Edwards wasn't launching another bid for the presidency. Instead, the senator came to say thanks for the honor of representing North Carolina in Washington for the past six years. His term ends Jan. 2.

Edwards' tour of six cities in three days gave him an opportunity to bid a graceful farewell but also to convey the message that he's looking ahead.

He confirmed that impression during an interview at the News & Record.

He plans to become more of an expert on policy issues ranging from poverty and health care to national security, and to figure out how Democrats can broaden their base of support.

"Democrats have to make a concerted effort to reach out to people who might have voted for George Bush or might not have voted," he said. That includes speaking the language of faith, family and other values that Republicans typically use to their advantage.

Edwards cited Jimmy Carter and Bill Clinton as Democrats who drew cultural connections to people in small-town, rural America. But he didn't sound overly enthusiastic when asked about the potential 2008 presidential prospects of another Southern governor -- North Carolina's Mike Easley.

"I think Mike is a terrific guy," Edwards said. "He's a great governor. He's never expressed any interest in that to me, but he's a terrific guy."

Edwards didn't push his own political fortunes during a relaxed, 45-minute interview. He shed his coat, sipped a Diet Coke and talked about the presidential campaign without a hint of bitterness. He expressed admiration for John Kerry and gratitude for the "incredible opportunity" of running for vice president. He didn't admit to regrets about his decision not to seek re-election to the Senate or apologize for what many North Carolinians viewed as his overly ambitious and premature bid for higher office.

Understandably, Edwards said his immediate priority is "getting Elizabeth well." His wife was diagnosed with breast cancer Nov. 3. He's optimistic about her recovery.

After that, it's hard to imagine Edwards, who's only 51, retiring to private life. He confessed an obvious compulsion: He loves campaigning.

If he can find a way to stay active in national affairs, Edwards might be able to compete for a presidential nomination in 2008.

Edwards said this campaign taught him, "You better believe in something and be willing to fight for it."

He gave every reason to believe that his farewell isn't forever.

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Cox's running mate

A time-honored saying goes "Those who refuse to learn the lessons of history are doomed to repeat them." Your Nov. 29 article on John Edwards' future quoted Ferrell Blount, chairman of the state Republican Party, as saying: "He'll fade into the shadows of history....How many vice presidential candidates can you think of that lost but came back to win the presidency? I can't think of any."

It turns out that Franklin D. Roosevelt ran for vice president in 1920 and lost. I'm sure Mr. Blount is loathe to recall, but FDR was later elected president on several occasions.

Tom Busch

Durham

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